1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 For example, cassava and sweet potatoes grown on the marsh-land farms must be dug out quickly as rice is planted on the same plots almost immediately. The harvesting of bulrush-millet and the first yam harvest, if delayed, may interfere with the planting of cotton, and the third weeding. A quick harvest, for a different reason, is imperative also for late millet and sorghum; here it is the danger of monkeys and birds damaging the standing grain which forbids delay. The Nupe have various ways and means to combat this danger: they put up scarecrows and erect high platforms on the fields from the top of which boys try to scare off monkeys and birds, by shouting, throwing stones, brandishing long sticks, or swinging long ropes tied between the platform and a near-by tree. In districts where the danger is very great the farmers may have to spend the night on the farm shortly before the harvest to guard their fields from these unwelcome guests.

It is interesting to supplement this large-scale survey of the agricultural cycle with a view from closer range which could do justice to the varying individual arrangements. To illustrate this aspect of Nupe farming I have compiled the farming diaries of three Kutigi farmers for two typical weeks—one between the end of May and the beginning of June, when the work is temporarily easing off, and the second towards the end of June, when work is at its highest. These farming diaries show the scope of the individual variations of the general time-table. We shall see that they are fairly considerable—in details; but in general lines the activities of the three farmers conform closely to a common pattern. During the more leisurely season all farmers are ready to interrupt their work, and rest for two or three days in succession; but during the busy season only a very weighty reason will make them stay at home and leave their fields even for a day. Indeed at that time of the year you will find the Nupe villages deserted from early morning till about 3 or 4 in the afternoon, save for women, children, and old men. Another interesting fact emerging from the diaries is the disregard, under pressure of work, for the traditional day of rest, Friday. To work six days and rest on the seventh is a common practice in Nupe (in fact a practice said to have been common already in the times before the spreading of Mohammedanism). But a farmer who knows himself behindhand with his work will disregard the rule. Finally, we see that in labour groups consisting of several people the family head may sometimes enjoy a short rest while the young men carry on the work; or that if one of the workers is called away, for example, by some social obligation, the work of the group goes on unimpaired. An arrangement of this kind is evidently impossible in the case of the farmer *K.*, who works on his own.

[461]

N.	*M.*	*K.*
Labour group: father and three sons	*Labour group: father and one son*	*Labour group: one man*
31.5.1936		
Goes out to farm about 8 a.m. Eats midday meal on the farm, and returns about 4 p.m.	Goes out to farm together with *N.*, whose farm is close to his own. Also returns with him.	Is away from Kutigi; went to a neighbouring village for the funeral of his sister.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

How are we to explain this comparatively sudden change? Viewing it from the general economic point of view all the advantages seem to be on the side of a large labour-unit: our discussion of the agricultural technique of the country has taught us that a large labour group represents, in Nupe, the only means of cultivating a large variety of both useful and profitable crops. Moreover, a large *efakó*-unit assures a certain measure of leisure to the family head and the old men in general, by enabling them to leave a large proportion of the actual work to the younger generation. It assures also a better distribution of responsibility, counting more adults among its members than does the small working-unit. It utilizes more fully the important incentive of competition and is, finally, of great educational value; for only in large labour-units are the young boys likely to work regularly in the company of others of their own age.

But if from point of view of group efficiency and security the large working-unit appears superior to the small (say) one- or two-men 'group', it is not necessarily so when looked at from the viewpoint of the individual. Take the question of leisure and distribution of responsibility. In one of the instances in which I found a large *efakó*-unit having been dissolved recently (six years ago), after the death of the family head, I was given this as the reason of the change: the new family head, the eldest of five brothers, had availed himself liberally of the privilege of leisure which his position implied, and frequently went hunting while the others were working on the farm. Now, while they had accepted the same arrangement under the old family head, their father, they declined to accord this privilege to their eldest brother, and preferred to dissolve the whole unit and work each for himself. To-day, working on their own, the individual family members have a comparatively larger measure of freedom and leisure, which they are free to use as they like. They can use their own discretion in planning the farm-work: of the five brothers two have taken to spend their spare time in making mats, a leisure-time occupation which, they assured me, is financially very advantageous to them; one has left the village; and the family head himself can still spend part of his time in hunting. Against the considerations of group efficiency thus stand individual considerations of gain, which provide another, and in some respects very different, standard of appreciation by which to measure the value of the large labour-unit. The word 'gain' should not be understood in too narrow a sense. Freedom of movement, freedom to choose a different profession (we remember, for example, the openings which the political life of the capital offered to young men of adventurous spirit), even freedom to enjoy one's leisure independent of the dictates of family requirements—these spiritual values appear under certain circumstances as tempting to the younger generation as does the prospect of material gain.

The two standards of appreciation will coincide where the *efakó* group is in a position to guarantee the satisfaction of all needs and demands which the group-members might feel. Nupe family co-operation in farm-work, once apparently more satisfactorily adjusted, is now failing in this respect. This failure can be attributed to two different develop-

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

ments: to an increase in the needs and demands on the part of the individual members with which the system of family co-operation failed to cope; or to a decline in the efficiency of the group to maintain its former standards of maintenance. The Nupe *efakó* system has, in fact, failed on both accounts. As regards the first, a large variety of new needs and wants, temptations and values have spread, primarily from the town, and have begun to transform the original peasant culture; as regards the second, the family head is to-day frequently unable to meet out of the family income two financial demands which are regarded as essential to the *efakó* concept, the payment of the bride-price and the payment of tax for the individual members of the *efakó* group.

Certain of the influences which have thus led to the decline of the large working-unit are no doubt due to factors of modern culture change. Yet it would be wrong to regard the change in the structure of the working-unit merely as a result of the outside influence of culture contact. The structural change forms part of a much wider phenomenon; it is the result of an intrinsic economic development, namely, the readjustment between productive organization and needs existing in the society. If the change were due exclusively to culture contact we should expect to find the larger working-unit preserved only in backward, 'unsophisticated', districts. This is not the case. The table on p. 243 showed that three households out of fifty had working-units composed of more than four adults. Of these three households only one belongs to a backward area—the household of the chief of Doko. The two other examples come both from one of the most progressive places in Nupe, Lemu, and from a group of farmers who, as mentioned before, have but recently undertaken the cultivation of a new commercial crop, red pepper, to replace another commercial crop, ground-nuts, which had not proved an economic success. A large working group is essential to the cultivation of this new crop. In these two households the young men have remained in the *efakó*, content with their position, while the family head, in turn, is able to provide bride-price and tax-money. Here, then, culture contact so far from being responsible for the dissolution of the large working-unit has on the contrary supplied a type of production which enables the large working-unit to maintain itself; paradoxically, culture contact has placed the *efakó*-unit in a position to satisfy those very demands and needs which culture contact has newly imposed upon the society. However, these instances from Lemu are exceptional: neither in Mokwa, the centre of ground-nut cultivation, nor in Kutigi, where cotton is grown on a comparatively large scale, has the large *efakó* group survived. The exceptional cases which I have discovered are too few to warrant a more far-reaching, systematic explanation. Moreover, whereas in this case attractions and temptations appealing to the younger generation are partly responsible for the social change, individual differences must play a considerable part. We can only tentatively point to a certain negative evidence: the absence of some of these 'temptations' in Lemu which have made the younger generation in Mokwa and Kutigi claim an early economic independence. Lemu is neither a centre of native trade, nor does a profitable alternative

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

462 are indispensable, and are accordingly rewarded in the disposal of crops intended for marketing. There are various methods in the disposal of 592 crops. One is the following: the family head hands the produce he intends to sell over to his wife, either the whole produce at once, immedi- 443 ately after the harvest, or small quantities at different times, according to whether he is in need of ready money or can wait for a better price later in the year. His wife will then sell the produce in the market and return the money she received for it to the husband. He gives her a little of this money, half as present, half as commission. His gift varies with the price which she has managed to obtain, and will express his appreciation of her more or less clever marketing. The woman may, of course, have to try a good many different markets if she wants to obtain the best price; and the men may not always be in a position to check the price which their wives quote to them after the sale. My information is that the women do not hesitate to take advantage of this lack of control; but the men, it seems, are as well aware of this and regard it as a legitimate way of making money. Another method, possible only if the women have sufficient money in hand, is this: the family head sells the whole produce directly to his wife after the harvest. She pays for it, stores the produce in her own granaries, and sells it later in the year when prices have gone up, possibly in small quantities at a time to obtain the best price. This method is as a rule applied in the disposal of palm-kernels and the fruits of the locust-bean tree. Another method in the disposal of crops does not enlist the help of the women of the house—although it may have to enlist the help of other women in the person of the traders. It is limited to a few kinds of produce only: rice, kola-nuts, and also palm-kernels in case one's own wife is not an expert in oil-making; these goods are sold by the family head directly to professional traders.

So far the role of the Nupe woman—more precisely the wife of the 462 Nupe farmer—is that of a 'broker' and 'middleman'. In the disposal of 592 the produce of certain fruit-bearing trees, however, the women are assigned direct and absolute property rights. The fruit of the locust- 422 bean so far as it has to be plucked from the tree is disposed of in the way described above; but the fallen fruits of that tree belong entirely to the women of the house. They can do with them what they like, and the money which they obtain from the sale of the raw as well as the 'refined' produce belongs to them. Also, the whole produce of the shea-nut tree belongs to the women. The exploitation of the shea-nut tree, the fruit of which is of comparatively high commercial value, is regarded as a definite monopoly of the Nupe women, and as representing a direct compensation for their contribution to the expenses of the household.

462 The picking of the fruit of the shea-nut tree by small groups of women also furnishes an example of a co-operative organization among the 476 women beyond the single household or family, somewhat similar to the system of collective labour organized by the men. There exists another 461 form of collective female labour which is regarded by the people themselves as the exact counterpart to the men's *egbe*. As the men, in *egbe* work, build or repair houses and roofs, the women's collective work is

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

employed in the beating of the floors of the huts or the platforms in front and between the huts. This work is done in the evenings, when the women have finished their own housework. It has all the elements of the *egbe*: the generous meal awaiting the workers, the singing and dancing—the beating itself is done rhythmically, to the accompaniment of songs (no musical instruments are employed in this or in any of the women's dances), and in its movements the motions of work and dance are attractively combined. The group of women fills the hut to overflowing. They are arranged in concentric circles, pressing closely against each other. Bent low over the floor they beat the ground three times with the heavy wooden flail which they hold in their right hand, then pull themselves up, lift both hands in the air, and take a measured dance step towards the centre and back again, and then bend down once more to resume the beating of the floor. Or they fill this rhythmical pause in the work with the verse of some interminable song, and while singing they move a few steps along in the circle; when the moving ring comes to a halt they bend down to their work, to interrupt it once more in the rhythmical motion of this 'ring-dance'. Nor is the incentive of competition absent in this *egbe* of the women. House-groups compete with house-groups; girls of different age are assigned different tasks: small girls of 6–7 are working slowly and silently on the outskirts of the group; girls of 12 or so are singing with the women and work towards the inside, trying to emulate the speed and ease of the grown-ups; and the adult women, leading in dance and work, spur their teams to almost breathless speed. As they work and dance, closely packed into the small dark hut, stripped to the waist, their bodies glistening with sweat and spattered with mud, beating, singing, stamping, and shouting, they seem to be actors in some exciting savage ritual rather than in ordinary work.

To return to the more prosaic aspects of the division of labour between the sexes, and to the question of the 'compensation' for her contributions to the household which the exploitation of shea-nut trees allows the Nupe woman. The clearly defined attitude of the people with regard to this question of 'compensation' and the economic rights of the women in general is illustrated in the following example. We remember that the roast-ovens in which the shea-nuts are dried before being marketed or manufactured into shea-butter are built by the men. Now, in Leaba I found that the women had to dry shea-nuts in the sun, a much slower and more laborious procedure, as all their ovens were dilapidated and sadly in need of repair. I inquired why the men did not build new ones. The men explained they had no time and money. I suggested, half jokingly, that the men might be given a share in the profits made on the shea-nuts and in return repair the roast-ovens. Whereupon the women, realizing that their own special interests were involved, joined in the discussion, which is interesting enough to be given here word for word.

Women: 'Why should we give the men part of our money? Do we not cook porridge for them?'

I: 'But he gives you the grain for making the porridge.'

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

tion, for their pocket-money. For example, a father would give his boy 2*d.* to buy cotton-thread which the boy would then plait into trouser strings and sell for 3*d.*; or boys work thin strips of leather into the lacquered amulet strings which the Nupe wear round the neck, making again a profit of 1*d.*

A few examples may illustrate the economic scope of these handicrafts. Straw hats are made of narrow strips of plaited grass, sewn together in spirals. The making of a good straw hat takes from three to four days if the hat-maker buys the plaited strips of straw ready-made, and five days if he plaits them himself. A plain hat is sold for 4*d.* to 6*d.*, the material costing between 1*d.* and 2*d.* A more expensive type of hat, in which part of the crown is covered with leather-work, is the product of two craftsmen, straw-hat maker and leather-worker. A hat of this kind sells for 1*s.* The Bida tailors produce a variety of goods: caps both plain (machine-made) and embroidered; gowns, trousers, saddle-cloths. A plain white cap is sold for 4*d.*, the cost of the material being 2*d.*; a tailor can produce four such caps a day. The embroidered caps are sold for 1*s.*, the material costing 6*d.*; one cap is made in three days. Plain white gowns, also machine-made, are sold for 7*s.* 6*d.*, the cost of the material being 5*s.*; it takes one or two days to make. A simple saddle-cloth takes from three to five days to make; the cost of the material is 6*d.*, and it is sold for 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* A more elaborate cloth, embroidered and dyed in various colours, takes twenty days to make; the cost of the material is 3*s.*, and it is sold for 10*s.* An embroidered gown is made in fifteen to twenty days. Embroidered Bida gowns are famous all over Nigeria; they are sold for £3 to £5 in Bida, and for much more in the north. The cost of the gown itself (which is made by the ordinary tailor) and of the material used in the embroidery comes to between 15*s.* and 30*s.*; the profit of the craftsman is thus between £2 and £3. But then, he may not be able to sell a gown of this kind, or receive an order for an embroidered gown, oftener than once a year.

We have already mentioned that certain villages, e.g. Kutigi, are famous for their mat industry. Every man and boy in Kutigi works mats in his spare time—and spare time here means just as much the leisure season of the year as every hour that can be spared from farm-work. When sitting in front of their houses in the evenings, even when walking home from the farms, the people are working: they carry a supply of dried grass dyed in different colours, in a kind of quiver under the arm and, while they walk or talk, their fingers are busy plaiting the grass into long, narrow strips. The strips are 3 or 4 inches wide, and up to 15 yards long. The Nupe make oval mats, in which the long strips are sewn together in a multicoloured spiral pattern; or square mats, in which the strips, cut to the same length, are sewn together edge to edge, again in a multicoloured design. The Nupe also make square mats of split sorghum and maize stalks, often dyed in red, yellow, and black, which are harder of texture and have a glossy surface. The oval mats take from five to seven days to make; the cost of the material—grass brought from the river swamps (see p. 200)—and the dye is 5*d.*; the mat is sold in Kutigi for 9*d.* or 10*d.*, and in Bida, after it has passed through

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

TABLE III

Temporary Labour

	Home	*Farmers*	*Guild craft*	*Individual craft*	*Mallams*	*Traders*	*Nobility*	*No altern. occupation*	*Total*
Occupation of father	Bida	4	1	13	9	1	11	..	39
	Country	10	..	..	6	..	2	..	18
	Total	14	1	13	15	1	13	..	57
Alternative occupation of labourer	Bida	4	1	20	8	..	..	5	38
	Country	16	..	..	2	..	..	1	19
	Total	20	1	20	10	..	..	6	57

with Table I we can see that of the 16 farmers who have sought work as labourers only 1 has abandoned farming permanently for labourer's work, while 15 remained seasonal labourers. Turning to the Bida contingent we see that among the different professions which contribute to temporary labour individual crafts come first and Mallams second—the most loosely organized occupational groups thus contribute most heavily to occasional labour. The occupations of the families of which these labourers come appear in a slightly different order of importance: individual crafts are, again, first, with 'nobility' second and Mallams third. 'Nobility' means here mostly the lower political ranks, above all 'household' and *bara* ranks. Their share in the contribution reflects the great political and economic changes that have deprived many members of this 'leisure class' of a livelihood mainly derived from warfare or political attachment.

But what are the incentives which led the men from the other occupational groups to give up their previous occupation or to undertake the work of labourers in addition to their ordinary profession? This question is answered by the data of the last table.

TABLE IV

	Married	*Unmarried*	*Tax as reason*
Permanent labour	9	12	..
Temporary labour (Bida)	9	13	4
Temporary labour (Country)	6	9	5
Age 20–5	4	10	..
„ 25–30	3	8	..
„ 30–5	4	4	..
„ 35–40	4	..	..

The majority among permanent as well as temporary labourers is unmarried—although many of the men, as we can see, have reached, and partly passed, the age at which it is normal for the Nupe man to marry. The work as labourers in their case was undertaken with the intent to obtain money for the bride-price, a plan which did not always materialize as our figures show, especially in Bida. For there are many other uses for money, and some, as we shall see later, may interfere with the laudable intention of working for one's bride-price. In a number of cases the reason for becoming a labourer was to obtain money for tax,

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

either for oneself or for one's family. One young labourer from the country gave his father 5*s.* out of his weekly wages of 7*s.* to put by for his bride-price; another kept 2*s.* to 3*s.* a month for himself, and gave the rest to his father. Many Bida labourers, on the other hand, used the whole money for themselves; some explained that they had become labourers because there was no money in their old profession, others because they wanted to be independent and because their fathers or elder brothers could not give them as much money as they liked to have.

To summarize: as one would expect, paid labour, especially temporary labour, does not represent a 'real' profession in the sense of an occupation involving special training and selection of workers. It is essentially a stopgap occupation chosen to supplement or replace a failing normal source of income. Owing to the specific composition of Nupe society the new profession is being adopted by certain social groups and strata more than by others. Yet in some respects paid industrial labour must be regarded almost as a modern continuation of forms of occupations which, in the traditional society, bore the same supplementary and stopgap character. As such it appeals strongly to the individual craftsman, to Mallams, and *bara*, who depend for their livelihood on similar forms of unskilled and partly temporary work. It differs from these other occupations, however, in that it is carried out on the road and in the workshop yard instead of in the home, and that it represents heavy manual labour, and not light work which it is easy to combine with a dignified social status. The labourers, unlike the individual craftsmen, can no longer pretend that they belong to the leisured class. If they receive better and more regular pay, they also lose caste. This explains why of the many hundreds of men who, once members of the privileged classes, are to-day men 'without occupation',[1] gaining a precarious livelihood from occasional work, only those coming from the lowest grade of the 'upper classes' have chosen the profession of labourers.

In the case of the peasants we can no longer speak of any inherent congruity between their work and the new temporary occupation. To them, especially to the peasants who do not practise a handicraft beside agriculture, paid labour in addition to farm-work, a form of labour, moreover, which keeps them for months from their homes, must appear as something quite new and unprecedented. If to-day paid labour is gradually attracting the peasant class as well, twenty or thirty years ago the (very prosperous) Nupe peasants had to be coaxed by all available means to undertake temporary paid labour, for example, in railway construction. The more 'sophisticated' Hausa and Yoruba were already then flocking in large numbers to work of this kind. Missionaries who knew Nupe country at that time told me that it was often impossible in the peasant districts to obtain even porters to carry loads; the promise of money did not attract them sufficiently to make them leave their homes even temporarily, to upset their whole routine of work or forgo their well-earned leisure. In certain backward and prosperous districts this

[1] An unofficial occupational census of Bida lists 1,130 men under the class 'no occupation'. They belong without exception to the titled leisured classes of the Emirate.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

a person of consequence, but did not find it at all out of place that he should have built himself such a pretentious house. We shall also hear later that in the Bida age-grade associations young men of low birth can even taste the thrill of having special drum-signals and songs composed for them like the members of the nobility.

Polygamy is another characteristic instance. The large-scale polygamy of the Nupe aristocracy remains beyond the reach of all other classes. Polygamy as it exists in the houses of the Nupe kings must even be regarded as a royal prerogative and thus as a fixed symbol of status. Yet polygamy on a more modest scale represents another universal want, the effectiveness of which can be studied in every stratum of society, and when peasants tell you of the 'good old times' when their chiefs and elders were able to marry large numbers of wives, they express the effectiveness of this incentive.[1]

We may also mention the demands of hospitality, which are recognized among the poor as well as the rich. Inability to fulfil these demands is regarded as a definite deprivation. Even in small peasant households will you find 'permanent' guests—persons who have been adopted into the household and may even be supported by their hosts when they are too old, or too ill, to gain their own living. Significantly, they were described to me as *ke bara na*, 'a kind of *bara*'.

One of the common ideals of the people of Nupe demands closer investigation. The reliance on employed labour by the privileged sections of the society establishes a separate leisured class, which lives by the labours of others and gains its livelihood to a large extent from the 'interest' borne by their human capital. Evidently, 'leisure' is a relative concept. In a society where the large majority works (say) ten hours a day, a group which can gain its livelihood by working only half the time represents already, comparatively speaking, a 'leisured class'. Thus for Nupe, as for every society, the definition of the leisured class must remain fluid. The well-to-do traders, the 'intelligentsia' of the Mallams, the rich landowners, and the well-paid N.A. officials, all are, in different measure, members of the leisured class compared with the hard-working farmers, craftsmen, or manual labourers. Let us understand the full import of this fact. Many forms of enjoyment depend upon leisure: recreation and aesthetic pleasures; among women, the possibility of keeping young and attractive. They all form part of the standard of living which is typical of the highest social stratum of Nupe. Again, they become, as such, also incentives for Nupe society at large, and affect the evaluation of specific occupations. We have studied their effectiveness in such reactions as the break-up of the family labour-unit under the influence of what we have called the 'new values and temptations' spreading from the town; we shall discover an even more conspicuous instance in the spreading of the Mallam profession.

[1] It is impossible to test the correctness of their sometimes rather extravagant claims. Yet the psychological reality of the incentive is unaffected by such questions of historical truth.